

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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P 151230Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7283

S E C R E T LIBREVILLE 0083

NODIS

AF FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFLE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, MILI, PFOR, GB, US

SUBJ: GABONESE REQUEST FOR ARMS ASSISTANCE

1. SUMMARY. MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT AND SENIOR GABONESE MILITARY DURING VISIT OF DOD SURVEY TEAM PROVIDED FRESH EVIDENCE THAT GOG HAS INTERPRETED PAST USG STATEMENTS AS COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE SOME GRANT MILITARY AID. GIVEN IMPORTANCE OF GOG STEADFASTNESS ON ANGOLAN ISSUE, BELIEVE IT VERY MUCH IN OUR INTEREST NOT TO DISAPPOINT THIS GABONESE EXPECTATION, AND THEREFORE STRONGLY RECOMMEND SOME MEANS BE FOUND TO INCLUDE GRANT ELEMENT IN PACKAGE WHICH EMERGES FROM CONSIDERATION OF SURVEY TEAM REPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED SEPTEL, DOD MILITARY SURVEY TEAM LEFT GABON JANUARY 15 WITHOUT HAVING HAD RETURN MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO ORIGINALLY INCLUDED IN THEIR SCHEDULE. DIRECTEUR DE CABINET HAS PROMISED ME APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, AT WHICH TIME I EXPECT RECEIVE FORMAL STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT OF GABONESE REQUIREMENTS IN SECURITY FIELD.

3. IN KEEPING WITH PARAS 3-B AND 5-C OF THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE (STATE 000807), MEMBERS OF SURVEY TEAM CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANY KIND OF COMMITMENT FOR US ASSISTANCE. NEVER-

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THELESS, IT WAS CLEAR THROUGHOUT THEIR SERIES OF MEETINGS

WITH PRESIDENT AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITH SENIOR OFFICERS OF VARIOUS SECURITY SERVICES THAT GABONESE HAVE INTERPRETED PREVIOUS STATEMENTS BY USG REPRESENTATIVES (IN PRESIDENT'S MEETINGS WITH ACTING ASST. SEC. MULCAHY IN KINSHASA AND WITH ASST. SEC. SCHAUFELER HERE) AS CONSTITUTING COMMITMENT TO SOME FORM OF GRANT ASSISTANCE ON URGENT BASIS.

4. CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH JUSTIFIED INITIAL POSITIVE RESPONSE TO BONGO'S REQUEST FOR ARMS ASSISTANCE APPEAR EVEN MORE COMPELLING TODAY THAN TWO MONTHS AGO. GABON HAS NOT ONLY STOOD FAST IN FACE OF SEVERE PRESSURE FROM PRO-MPLA FORCES BUT HAS ALSO MADE MAXIMUM USE OF ITS AVAILABLE LEVERAGE TO HOLD OTHERS IN LINE (MOST DRAMATICALLY BY LENDING C-130 TO MAURITANIA FOR TRANSPORT OF TROOPS TO VILLA CISNEROS, BUT ALSO IN DISPATCH OF HIGH-LEVEL LOBBYING MISSIONS TO NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES). AS PRO-MPLA FORCES CONTINUE THEIR ARM-TWISTING TACTICS ALONG LINES ANTICIPATED BY OAU A/SYG ONU (ADDIS ABABA 0431), ROLE OF GABON AND HANDFUL OF OTHERS WHO CONSTITUTE HARD CORE OF BACKING FOR FNLA AND UNITA WILL BECOME EVEN MORE CRUCIAL. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, "CONCRETE DEMONSTRATION OF POLITICAL SUPPORT" FOR BONGO (IN WORDS OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DOD TEAM) LOOKS FROM HERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

5. STATE 009038, JUST RECEIVED, FURTHER UNDERSCORES KEY POSITION OCCUPIED BY GABON IN RELATION TO ANGOLAN SITUATION. AS WE ARE REPORTING SEPTTEL, WE BELIEVE PRESIDENT WOULD AGREE TO USE OF LIBREVILLE FOR USN SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS IF PRESENTED WITH FORMAL REQUEST, JUST AS HE HAS OFFERED TO MAKE FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR TRANSSHIPMENT OF MATERIAL INTO ANGOLA. HOWEVER, SUCH HIGHLY VISIBLE ASSOCIATION WITH US MILITARY OPERATIONS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ADD TO GABONESE SENSE OF VULNERABILITY, AND RAISE GOG EXPECTATIONS IN TERMS OF USG SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MEET THREATS THEY PERCEIVE.

6. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT SOME MEANS BE FOUND TO PROVIDE AN ELEMENT OF GRANT ASSISTANCE TO GOG IN FULFILLMENT OF USG COMMITMENT AS PERCEIVED

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BY BONGO AND HIS COLLEAGUES. FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT, SUGGEST THAT GRANT ELEMENT OF FINAL PACKAGE BE FOCUSED ON ITEMS OF GREATEST PERSONAL INTEREST TO PRESIDENT (SUCH AS EQUIPMENT FOR PRESIDENTIAL GUARD) AND THAT IT CONSIST INsofar AS POSSIBLE OF CURRENT MODELS SO THAT WE ARE NOT ACCUSED, LIKE FRENCH, OF GIVING GABON ONLY OUR CAST-OFFS. STEIGMAN

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